

State Patrol and motor carrier enforcement

Safety is a key priority for the Wisconsin State Patrol. State troopers not only enforce traffic safety laws, but are also involved in drug interdiction and play a key role in the reconstruction of crash scenes. The state's 400 sworn troopers and 112 motor carrier inspectors play a vital role in ensuring public safety by enforcing laws and assisting stranded motorists.



Additionally, the State Patrol is upgrading its wireless communications systems, increasing efficiency for trooper communications when helping with motorists. The State Patrol also expanded its training academy. Beyond training State Patrol troopers, it now includes a regionalized Police Corps Training program to focus on local and county law enforcement, helping bridge the gap between state and local law enforcement initiatives.

New technology like Global Positioning Systems (GPS) helps troopers reconstruct crash scenes and route emergency medical helicopters to crash sites quickly.

Weigh-in-motion truck scales have reduced delays for truckers and improved comprehensive enforcement of weight laws – protecting highway infrastructure and enhancing public safety.

Preserving the environment

Wisconsin is recognized as a national leader in enhancing our transportation system, while preserving our state's environment and high quality of life. The department's comprehensive approach to environmental issues is to avoid environmental impacts whenever possible, minimize impacts to the extent practical and mitigate when they unavoidable.

Air quality

WisDOT's vehicle emission inspection and maintenance program, in place since 1984, conducts tests on about 750,000 vehicles each year, preventing an estimated 40,000 tons of auto-related emissions from ever entering Wisconsin's air annually.

Despite increases in population and travel, the amount of pollution emitted from personal vehicles in Wisconsin continues to decline. In 1990, highway sources accounted for about 40% of total emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). By 1999, highway sources accounted for only 28% of total VOC emissions.



Thanks to increasingly restrictive standards, cleaner-burning fuels, and an aggressive vehicle inspection program, emissions from highway sources are expected to continue their downward trend.

Water quality

Wisconsin's erosion control standards are among the toughest in the nation in protecting water resources at airport, railroad and highway construction sites. State administrative rules have also been revised to address management of storm water runoff from transportation facilities.

In the last several years, WisDOT has been investigating the potential impacts of road salt on groundwater. To date, about 20 sites have been monitored by analyzing soil, water or vegetation samples.

Wetland banking

Wisconsin's wetland banking system is one of the first and most successful in the nation. Since July 1993, WisDOT has had an approved wetland mitigation banking program – an accounting system that tracks

the type and acres of wetlands impacted by transportation projects.

Since 1990, for every acre of wetland lost to transportation-related construction, WisDOT has created or restored about 1.4 wetland acres. Between 1990 and January 1, 2000, WisDOT was involved in the restoration or creation of 2,249 wetland acres.

Noise abatement

WisDOT continues to work with local communities to design functional and aesthetically-acceptable structures that absorb traffic-generated noise.

The Wisconsin Noise Barrier Study, completed in 1990, identified 207 sites as eligible for retrofit noise barrier construction. So far, 19 barriers have been constructed costing about \$11 million.

Historic preservation

Wisconsin has a rich Native American heritage. WisDOT has actively involved tribes to design transportation projects to minimize impacts on Native American sites.

The Rustic Roads Program preserves some of the state's most scenic and lightly-traveled roads for the enjoyment of motorists, bikers and hikers. Currently, 91 Rustic Roads wind through the state, spanning over 480 miles.

WisDOT also conducted a detailed survey of historic bridges throughout the state and actively works with local governments regarding the potential renovation and preservation of these historic structures.

Habitat

WisDOT mapped about 500 acres of native prairie-land areas along highway right-of-way. Plans are underway to preserve and enhance these areas in an effort to protect the rare plants and animals that live there.

Protecting one of these rare animals, the Karner Blue butterfly, led to creation of a national model for preserving an endangered species. WisDOT, in cooperation with the DNR and more than 20 other private and public entities in Wisconsin, helps manage thousands of acres of highway right-of-way to protect the Karner Blue's habitat.

Hazardous materials

Since the late 1980s, through its highway design and construction, WisDOT identified over 1,000 contaminated properties. These identifications resulted in environmental investigation or remediation, and removal of 500 leaking underground storage tanks.

WisDOT performs about 50 environmental assessments annually along highway right-of-way where potential sources of petroleum or hazardous waste contamination may occur.

Re-use of industrial by-products

Since 1986, WisDOT has successfully utilized over one million cubic yards of industrial by-products (coal ash and foundry sand) as a substitute for naturally-occurring native soils needed as fill for transportation-related construction projects. If piled onto a standard-sized football field, this amount of material would be over 475 feet deep.

Environmental benefits include a reduced need to extract native sand, gravel or soil for fill, and preservation of limited landfill space that would otherwise be needed to dispose of the industrial by-product.



Photo by Thomas A. Meyer

Karner Blue butterfly